



The Children's Assessment Center

Guidelines for Assessing/Monitoring Individuals Working with Children

The most recent statistics indicate that 1 in 4 females and 1 in 6 males will be sexually abused by the time they reach the age of 18. Additionally, most victims of sexual abuse are violated by someone they (and often their families) know and trust. Therefore, it is imperative to closely assess those who are interested in working with children prior to allowing them to do so and to closely monitor them throughout their work with children.

Individuals who commit sexual offenses vary in age, gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. However, there are some common characteristics of sex offenders, which can be used to screen applicants who wish to work with children. There are basically three types of sex offenders who offend against children: situational, preferential, and predatory. Situational offenders do not have a true sexual preference for children and often have "normal" adult relationships. However, if given the opportunity, these individuals will sexually abuse a child. Preferential offenders are primarily sexually attracted to and aroused by children. Predatory offenders prey on children and often have literally built their entire lives around children and child-related activities. ALL types of offenders are usually very good at developing "double lives" so that others do not suspect that they are sex offenders. They are experts at manipulating others, lying and appearing to be upstanding citizens. Thus, it is very difficult to ascertain whether an individual might be predisposed towards sexually abusing a child. That's why it is imperative that we educate our children, pay close attention to our children and trust our children.

It is recommended that the following be done in assessing individuals who wish to work with children:

- Criminal background check
- List of personal references
- Agree to initial trial period of training in which they are never alone with children and closely monitored by a mentor, who has been working with the children and can further assess individual

It is also recommended that the following be done in monitoring individuals who are working with children:

- Educate children about the dynamics of sexual abuse
- Educate individuals working with children about what sexual abuse is, signs and symptoms of sexual abuse, and what to do if a child discloses sexual abuse
- Make sure children have a safe way to discuss those adults who work with them
- Obtain regular feedback regarding their work with children

The best way to prevent sexual abuse from occurring is by educating children, letting adults know that you are aware that sexual abuse occurs, that you are watching everyone's behavior and by dispelling the taboo against discussing sex. Sex offenders look for children, adults, and organizations that do not pay enough attention to what is going on. If being a little more strict in your hiring practices scares some adults away, those are likely the ones that you would not want working with children.